

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SEEKS INPUT FROM RESIDENTS
AND HEALTH PROVIDERS ON SERVICES FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN**

(Richmond, Va.) – The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is asking residents and health care providers for their views on the public health policies and services that are provided to women, infants and children in the state. It's all part of a five-year needs assessment and plan, which are required for continuation of the \$26 million Maternal and Child Health Block Grant that the health department administers.

"The comments we receive will help us determine the most appropriate use of money from the block grant to provide services that best protect the health of mothers and children," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H.

Residents and health care providers are encouraged to log on to www.vahealth.org to complete an on-line survey by April 15, 2005. Survey participants will be asked to identify what they think are the five major health issues facing children, teens and women and which aspects of VDH's efforts to better the health status of these populations need improvement. The Web site also includes a slide presentation that outlines the purpose and history of the block grant and details national and state performance measures and priorities.

"This is the first time we've used an on-line survey to gather public opinion for the block grant needs assessment," said Janice Hicks, Director of Policy and Assessment in VDH's Office of Family Health Services.

Residents and health care providers are also invited to provide input at regional public hearings scheduled across the Commonwealth. The hearings are scheduled as follows:

- Richmond – April 11, 3:00-5:00 p.m., Chesterfield County Central Library, 9501 Lori Rd.
- Wytheville – April 12, 3:00-5:00 p.m., Wytheville Community Center, 250 S. 4th St.
- Newport News–April 19, 3:00-5:00 p.m. Peninsula Health Dist. Auditorium, 416 J. Clyde Morris Blvd.
- Annandale–April 22, 1:00–3:00 p.m., Northern Virginia Regional. Commission, 7535 Little River Turnpike, Suite 100
- Charlottesville – April 27, 3:00-6:00 p.m., Albemarle Co. Office Bldg. Auditorium, 401 McIntyre Rd.

The last needs assessment, conducted in 2000, identified several areas of need including the problem of obesity among children and the ongoing need for screening of childhood diseases. Other findings include the need to improve access to prenatal care for low-income women and to reduce ethnic and racial disparities in health status.

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VDH encourages Virginians to share their opinions because the more input it receives the better it will be able to identify the most effective services to protect the health of mothers and children. The health department distributes funds from the block grant to agencies and organizations in the state to help improve the health of mothers and their children. The funds are used to assure access to quality maternity and child health services, especially for low-income families.

For more information about the online survey or public hearings, log on to www.vahealth.org. To learn more about the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, visit www.mchb.hrsa.gov and click on “Programs.”

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